

INFORMATION REPORT

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SOURCE

1. One of the most important aspects in the East-West struggle is the right approach to the people behind the Iron Curtain. Much more attention should be given to the most important means of anti-Communist propaganda for such people, ie, radio broadcasts beamed to those countries in the Soviet orbit. Listening to Voice of America broadcasts in Czechoslovakia today is truly nation-wide; about 70-80 per cent of the adult population listens regularly to at least two programs a week. In the news vacuum of the Soviet orbit, such broadcasts play a decisive role, which, in my opinion, is still not fully realized by the US. VOA's one competitor is Radio Free Europe, which is regarded by the Czechs almost as their own station; RFE seems to understand the difficult life in the CSR and the desperation and hopes of the people. If RFE could overcome some technical difficulties, it would lead VOA by a wide margin, but at present, I think that VOA has a considerable edge over RFE. Generally, the great majority of the Czech people like most of the VOA programs quite well. They look eagerly to VOA as a source of information on the free world, a ready reporter of world news, defender and promoter of American interests and the American way of life, and the interpreter of American opinion on the activities of the Communists in that part of the world behind the Iron Curtain. There are only two small groups in Czechoslovakia that do not listen to foreign broadcasts; the "hard core" Communist Party members, and the small group of over-intellectualized individuals, who hate Communism but have no faith in Western democracy. The latter group is very dangerous; checking its growth depends on the effectiveness of VOA and other foreign broadcasts.

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2. The number of radio sets in use today throughout Czechoslovakia in proportion to the population is one of the highest in the world. During the parliamentary debate on the 1952 budget (reported on Radio Prague, 16 Mar 52), a member of parliament stated that during 1951 the number of radio owners who had registered their sets with post office authorities showed a 5.3 per cent increase over the previous year. This means that at the present time there are well over two million radio receivers in operation, which adds up to about one set per family, including those in Slovakia. I think that the figure may well be as high as three million, since many sets captured from the Germans are not registered. The regime seems to encourage this wide-spread use of radio sets, presumably in the hope that more people will listen to Radio Prague and other Communist broadcasts. Actually, I believe that the additional radios mean an increase in the number of listeners to Czech language broadcasts from abroad.
3. The quality of VOA reception on the whole can be described as good. Reception is worst during the two most important and popular programs, "Report From America" at 2100 hours and "America Calling Czechoslovakia" at 1830 hours. Because most Czech radios are of fairly high quality (even the lower-priced sets have short wave bands), the people can usually find at least one band where the broadcasts can be heard. Jamming seems to be increasing in strength as well as in the number of wave bands jammed. During recent months I have noticed that interference with VOA broadcasts is in direct proportion to the content of the programs; i.e., jamming was very slight during the daily news but the moment that a commentary on purges in Czechoslovakia began, the jamming became so strong that it was not possible to hear what was being said. As listening to the medium wave band is practically impossible due to heavy and constant jamming, I believe that most people listen on short wave. The broadcasts of BBC and Radio Paris to Czechoslovakia are seldom jammed because of their poor propaganda value; jamming is concentrated on the broadcasts considered most dangerous to the Communists - those of VOA and RFE.
4. In my opinion, the timing of VOA broadcasts to Czechoslovakia is satisfactory to the majority of the listeners, although I do think some improvement could be made. It should be remembered that the people in Czechoslovakia go to bed early (around 2200 hours) from sheer physical exhaustion; in the rural areas people retire even earlier. The main shift in industry begins at 0600 hours. As most workers do not live near the factories, they must get up before 0500 hours. Further, Czech broadcasting stations cease operations at 2245 hours; the one exception is the new long wave station, used for disseminating propaganda abroad, which stays on the air until around midnight. This ban on late evening broadcasting, ordered in January 1952, increases the danger of detection while listening to VOA since even the tuning-in of foreign stations is often accompanied by sharp sounds in the speaker.
5. The programs beamed to Czechoslovakia prove that VOA has much good, factual material about the CSR. But one gets the impression that VOA does not have up-to-date information concerning the people, i.e., their state of mind after three years of Communist propaganda and mental pressure. This lack of understanding seems to me to be the major cause of difference in the reaction of listeners to RFE and VOA. This lack of understanding on the part of VOA might be caused by isolation or by insufficient contact. In this respect, RFE has a tremendous advantage in having its headquarters close to the Czech border; it is able to establish direct contact with refugees, and

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can "eavesdrop at the Iron Curtain". It appears to me that VOA, located on a distant continent, either does not get enough intelligence reports about the people of Czechoslovakia, or such reports reach VOA through such complicated channels that they arrive too late to give an up-to-date picture.

6. A few years ago it would have been impossible to try to describe the state of mind of the average Czech citizen. The years of oppression, however, have united the country as never before. First of all, the nation as a whole feels a certain amount of guilt for what was allowed to happen in February 1948. It is important that VOA take this into account when dealing with exiled Czechs and Slovaks. For those left in Czechoslovakia, there are no symbols of liberation or resistance movements, either at home or abroad. Those movements symbolized by Thomas Masaryk during World War I, and by Dr. Benes during World War II were accepted with patriotic enthusiasm as symbols of liberation at the time. But now such movements simply do not exist in the hearts of the Czech people and any attempt to use a group of exiled political leaders for such a psychological approach would be met with cold distrust. I do not mean to rule out future possibilities in this respect, but at this time, I would set a strict limit on the speeches of exiled political leaders used on VOA. The Czechs see these exiled politicians as very lucky individuals, who somehow managed to get out of the country in time to go to "paradise" as the Czechs call the free world. These exiled politicians are not directly blamed for the Communists' rise to power, but there is a strong general belief that as leaders they did not fulfill their obligations, that they did not do everything they might have to prevent the tragedy. Above all stands the fact that not a single shot was fired and that the Red coup was followed by the chaotic desertion of many democratic leaders who had not attempted any organized or even unorganized, symbolic resistance. It is easy to see that this moral defeat is in the minds of all the people. Life under the Communist regime, with its slavery and terror, is considered by many of the Czechs as a "cleansing bath". They feel strongly that moral guidance must come from their own ranks and not from emigrants. This fact should always be kept in mind by VOA when preparing programs with or about exiled political leaders. The people of Czechoslovakia are looking in vain for new moral leadership for the nation, in which they can put their faith. They distrust big words and empty speeches about democracy. No longer are they willing to listen to "old fashioned" speeches containing empty phrases which sound patriotic. Naturally, speeches made by exiled Czech politicians often fall in this category. Such broadcasts have no good effect and often are damaging to the cause of the West. The people in the CSR have not forgotten Munich in 1938 or what happened in Prague in February 1948; both are considered by the Czechs as complete failures on the part of the Western democracies. This should not be interpreted to mean that the Czechs no longer believe in democratic ideals. Quite the opposite is true, but the Czechs differentiate between empty speeches about democracy and real democracy, the philosophy of free men. I think it is true that the Czechs have a high level of education; moreover, the majority possesses the ability to think independently. There is no danger that the population would not understand or would not listen to quotations from the Bible, Lincoln, Masaryk, or an exposé made by Dean Acheson before a session of the UN. But they will not swallow the preachings of a self-righteous US Senator, for example; even less will they accept the words of exiled Czech politicians. Most such politicians cooperated with the Communists and then left the country without attempting any sort of defense for democratic ideals. This is a bitter pill in our history, and it should be taken into consideration, not only by VOA writers but also by the policy-making body of VOA.

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7. I think the people of Czechoslovakia would appreciate it if the main theme of VOA broadcasts were not the advertising of the American way of life (which, by the way, the Czechs wholeheartedly admire, but at this time consider as the "torment of Tantalus"), but rather the theme should be moral help for survival. To a people under Soviet domination such as the Czechs, the American way of life is not of primary interest; the most important thing is their own survival and liberation. They want to hear about the strength of the West and concrete comparisons between the Iron Curtain and free countries. The Czechs must be approached by VOA with absolute sincerity; any "all-wise" teaching or preaching should be eliminated from broadcasts. The Czechs are fed up with such advice. The persons preparing VOA programs should always try to put themselves in the frame of mind of the listener. Often the programs sound too stiff, as if they were being read from official bulletins. Often the programs lack the human touch. In general, they should be encouraging, offering hope, but carefully avoiding anything that would weaken the spiritual unity of the people. Programs may include information on the political activities of exiled Czechs, but any attempt on the part of these expatriates to tell the people back home what they should or should not do, should be shunned at this stage. Instead, much, much more should be done to assure the Czechs that they have not been forgotten by the free world. The main purpose of VOA broadcasts to Czechoslovakia should be to tell the Czechs how to keep up their courage for the future, and to strengthen their spiritual and physical resistance to the communist regime. Programs based on such a policy are most effective and most needed by people behind the Iron Curtain. According to my observations VOA broadcasts, as a general rule, should be divided into two groups and prepared under two basically different policies: one policy for programs directed at people in the free world, and one for those behind the Iron Curtain.
8. I believe that intelligence reports would bear me out in saying that a great majority of members of the Communist Party in the CSR are strongly opposed to the regime. In Czechoslovakia, the proportion of convinced CP members is definitely not more than 20 per cent of the total membership of the Party, and it is my personal opinion that the figure is even smaller. This fact should be taken into consideration in the preparation of programs for VOA. VOA should attack the CP and its leaders even harder and more often than it has in the past, but a sharp differentiation should be made between the rank and file members and the leaders of the CP. This is even more important today when young people just out of school are coerced into joining the party. Without any desire whatsoever to whitewash any former or present members of the CP, I do not believe that VOA, or any similar organization, should attempt to determine the guilt of the ordinary CP member at such a distance. Any threats or insinuations of future punishment simply serve to force such people to stick to the Party. The most important fact is that the people who do not belong to the Party are closely united with the majority of the rank and file CP members in resistance against the regime. Many students of Czech history believe that not even during the Nazi occupation was the nation more united in its hopes and sorrows.
9. VOA broadcasts should reflect the certainty of the eventual liberation of the CSR. There is a general feeling in Czechoslovakia that the US wants to preserve the "status quo". As opposed to the people of the free world, the people behind the Iron Curtain are not too happy to listen to peace propaganda. War is the only hope of the

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great majority of these oppressed peoples; they see no other chance to regain their freedom. During the past year the overall situation inside Czechoslovakia has become so unbearable that the Czechs no longer fear a war and the devastation that inevitably accompanies it. They are willing to see their country a shambles in order to regain their freedom. This feeling is strong in Czechoslovakia which suffered relatively little in World War II compared to Poland and some other countries. If VOA must disseminate peace propaganda in its programs, they should not be beamed to Czechoslovakia. I do not mean that VOA should immediately launch a campaign of war propaganda, but simply that the above facts should be taken into consideration in preparing programs.

10. In my opinion, VOA does not have the correct picture of the attitudes of the Czechs toward religion and the churches. Even though Czechoslovakia is statistically still a strong Catholic nation, the figures do not represent, by any means, the true picture. There is still a feeling of coldness toward the Vatican, even among the old, devout Catholics. The Czechs believe that they were never too well liked by the Vatican, therefore it does not do any good for VOA to mention repeatedly the changed feelings of the Vatican toward the Czechs. It is true that the desperate life in Czechoslovakia brings people closer to religion, but the VOA makes no distinction between church and religion. The Czechs are leaning more on religion in the general sense of the word rather than on a particular church, denomination, or sect. If they attend church more frequently, I think it is to spend more time in meditation, for moral encouragement, or even to protest against the regime. VOA's religious programs, in my opinion, should be limited to non-denominational broadcasts utilizing passages from the Bible, or from the religious writings of great authors which are now banned in Czechoslovakia. I don't think the VOA should expect favorable results from too many speeches by exiled priests or American church leaders of Czech or Slovak origin. Such persons undoubtedly love their old country, but they usually fill their speeches with heavy phrases which do nothing but cause confusion in the minds of the Czechs as to the position of the free world in respect to the CSR. These people again and again tell their listeners not to give up, and to believe liberation is near because the good God will see to it. This statement may be appreciated by a small number of old Slovak peasants, but most of the people begin to lose faith in their liberation if such a sentiment is repeated over a long period of time. They are quick to point out that they waited 300 years for liberation from the German Hapsburg dynasty, and that God had been witnessing the massacres and terror in the USSR for 30 years; they are therefore convinced that waiting for liberation from that source is hopeless. I may have expressed this too bluntly, but I am convinced that this is the true situation; and I am trying to show the mental attitude of the Czech people in the best way I know how.
11. The German question is of great interest to the Czech people. There are perhaps no two nations which have been fighting so continuously through the centuries, and at the same time living so close, in the political, economic and cultural fields. In case of war, the Czechs would welcome US forces with open arms, but they fear that the new forces of Germany would come in revenge. Now when the solution of the German problem has become the cornerstone of the future of Europe and the world, VOA maintains almost complete silence on the matter. At a time when the Communist presses are blasting the West on the German problem, the Czechs are getting very limited information from VOA on the subject, and no comments whatsoever regarding Czech

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interests. The people of the CSR are of the opinion that no answer is an answer too, and that something is being done of which the US and the West are ashamed. It is true that the German question is not the number one problem facing the Czechs today (of first importance, of course, is how they can throw off the Communist yoke), nevertheless, it still remains of fundamental interest to the people. There is complete confusion in the minds of the Czechs as to the position of the US regarding the German problem; one often hears the remark that the US is willing to satisfy all German aspirations without regard to the smaller nations, especially the Slavic. If it were properly aired, I believe the people of Czechoslovakia would understand the role of Germany and her importance in the common struggle against Communism.

12. News coverage by VOA is very good, particularly the coverage of world events, which finds no criticism among the listeners; it is this coverage of world news which gives VOA such a large audience. The reporting is current, exact, and objective. It is no exaggeration to say the whole CSR depends on VOA for world news. Not so good, however, is VOA's coverage of Czech domestic news. It must be remembered that the Czech press and radio do not keep the people informed about either world happenings or domestic events. VOA should not sacrifice its world coverage but should pay more attention to Czech domestic news and problems. It seems to me that if VOA could utilize US Government reports on Czechoslovakia without breaching security, they would have an excellent source of news and comment.
13. It is not sufficient for VOA to prepare news broadcasts based on facts, but, what is more important, great attention should be given to the responsibility for the effects of the broadcasts. I would like to give two examples of VOA's reporting which, in my opinion, show a fundamental lack of knowledge of the situation in Czechoslovakia as well as a complete lack of foresight, politically speaking, on the part of the writers.
 - (a) On several occasions in September 1951, VOA reported preparations for resettlement of the refugees from the famous "Konvalinka Freedom Train". As I recall, the VOA announcer said something to this effect "...and eight passengers from the Freedom Train were refused immigration visas to Canada for security reasons. The group, led by Dr. Svec, has to remain in Germany while the rest of the lucky, free people are on their way to Canada and the USA, etc..." From the comment that followed this news, all listeners could readily recognize that the writer and even the announcer were pleased that former CP members were rejected for security reasons and had to remain in Germany. For most Czechs, having to stay in Germany is like "Daniel in the lion's den". As a result of such reporting, the majority of the members of the CP, although strongly opposed to the regime, feel that they are forced to stick it out with the Party until the last moment since they see no other way out; from the VOA they can discern no trace of hope or encouragement, and certainly no advantage in defecting to the West. In effect, this broadcast undoubtedly discouraged defectors from the Soviet orbit. I do not mean that VOA should falsify the news, but in this case a politically acute writer would simply have stated that some of the people were going to Canada and the US and that the others would be resettled in other parts of the world.

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(b) Another example of harmful reporting: recently a Slovak architect escaped with his family and a friend across the Morava River into Austria in an old amphibious jeep. The refugee managed to induce a Communist official, either through bribery (probably with black market meat) or alcoholic means, to help him get the jeep into the restricted area at the Morava River border; the full name of official was broadcast over VOA and this probably resulted in the death penalty. What sort of official this man was is not important; what is important is the effect of such a broadcast on other officials, such people as border guards, who might have purposely missed when they fired at fleeing refugees. If threatened by public denunciation via VOA (to which the officials probably listen in secret), the number of people being assisted or "allowed" to come across the borders will decrease to nil. There are other Communist officials, I am sure, who would consider helping people flee, but if they will have to face such compromising revelations, they will certainly abandon any such ideas. In such cases, giving names can surely serve no useful purpose. If such a person is really a "dyed-in-the-wool" Communist, his day of reckoning will eventually come anyhow. The chances are, however, that he has taken his one opportunity of "kicking the Red Regime in the seat of the pants". Such reporting only increases the ruthlessness with which Communist orders are carried out because there is no doubt that corrective measures will be taken to insure that similar happenings do not occur in the future. The fact that UP, AP, or INS made the original report is no excuse for VOA. Border guards and Communist officials, with the exception of those in the higher echelons, are never allowed to read foreign newspapers, so that the only way they learn of such denunciations is from foreign broadcasts. I was not in Czechoslovakia at the time of the above incident, but I can well imagine the wave of resentment that swept the nation when they heard the broadcast.

14. In my opinion, the commentaries on VOA are not so good. The commentator should place himself in the position of the unhappy, desperate listeners; he should not give the impression that he is speaking from a sense of duty, or that he is reading from a dry textbook. There seems to be a complete lack of optimism in the broadcasts. I do not mean that VOA should color its programs so as to establish unfounded hopes. The Czech listener is eager to hear more comments on domestic issues, such as speeches of Red leaders, meetings of parliament (as well as other official meetings), articles in Red newspapers, etc. The programs of Radio Prague could serve as a rich source not only for commentaries, but also for jokes, questions to Red leaders, etc., all of which would be eagerly listened to by the Czechs. I am continually surprised that VOA does not exploit the stupidity of the Communists as exhibited by their lies. Some quite important events are left without comment by VOA. A striking example of this was the reply by the US Department of State to official Czech protests regarding the rearming of West Germany and encouraging Nazi elements among German expellees from Czechoslovakia. Of course the answer from the US was not mentioned by Czech newspapers or by Radio Prague. In my opinion, the US reply was masterfully written, stating clearly not only the policy of the US regarding the resettlement in Germany of three million Germans expelled from Czechoslovakia but also about the progress being made in the program. The US no doubt felt that Czech fears had been allayed and that they had not irritated the Germans. But this important statement of US policy hardly reached the Czech people because VOA did not even broadcast in its entirety the official statement. Such an item should have been broadcast several times and included extensive and serious comments.

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15. In my opinion too much time is devoted on VOA to programs of little or no interest to Czech listeners. This is especially true of the various specialized and entertainment programs. The idea behind the specialized programs is good, but some could be shortened and others eliminated and more desirable programs substituted. A good example is the regular weekly broadcast for short wave radio hams. With the exception of the very few Trade Union "Clubs" used to spread Communist propaganda, there are no radio hams in Czechoslovakia. Excepting these, amateur radio broadcasting is strictly forbidden. I think it was a good idea to weed out almost all music as well as drama from the VOA schedule. To believe that programs for youth should consist only of jazz music and sports news is a mistake; I never heard of a youngster in the CSR who listened to jazz on VOA. Music on domestic stations is much easier to hear and is not so potentially dangerous to the listener. Even when VOA programs are not jammed, technical difficulties make good reception of music difficult. It may not be known outside of Czechoslovakia that records of American jazz, made in the CSR, can be easily purchased in Prague; they sell for about 50 per cent more than records of "non-Western" music. Recordings made by such favorites as Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman can be obtained without any difficulty.
16. I would like to suggest the following ideas for new programs that would be of particular interest to the people in Czechoslovakia:
- I think it would be very good if, once a week, the main organizations broadcasting to the CSR, i.e., VOA, RFE, BBC, Radio Paris, could transmit the same program at the same time over all short wave lengths. The program could be scheduled during the weekend, and include, in half an hour, a summary of the week's main events, plus comments. The preparation of such a program could be extended among the participants. Such a broadcast would be extremely important to the listeners since the effectiveness of jamming would be drastically reduced by so many stations broadcasting at the same time. In addition, such coordination would concretely demonstrate the unity of the democratic world in the fight against Communism, as well as the unified support of these people under Soviet domination.
 - As I have mentioned, the most popular programs are the ones transmitted at 2100 hours ("Report From America") and at 1830 hours ("America Calling Czechoslovakia"). Rather than repeat broadcasts of these programs during the night or in the early morning, I think a completely new program at 2215 or 2230 hours would be highly desirable. This is about the time when most of the people are returning home from the numerous meetings, etc. that they are forced to attend. The program need be only a 15 minute daily news resume plus the best excerpts from all previous programs of the day.
 - The Czech people are hungry for entertainment based on politics. Political satire in the form of jokes, dialogues, or satirical articles, read simply, by a good announcer would be most acceptable to the Czech listeners. In my opinion this should be the only type of entertainment program on VOA.
 - I suggest instituting a program, called perhaps "Czechoslovaks Abroad", consisting not of reports on the activities of political exiles, but rather news about the resettlement of the thousands of Czech refugees. A similar program aired by RFE about life in Czech communities in all parts of the world is one of the most popular in Czechoslovakia.

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- A weekly program should be devoted to the progress of science in the "Free World". The people of Czechoslovakia, hermetically sealed off from the West, are eager to learn about the latest technical and scientific developments. Such a program would give the people added confidence in the growing strength of the Western World.
 - I suggest that a weekly program be directed at Communist Party members, during which the Party would be attacked relentlessly. Purges of long standing Party members, their offenses and threatened punishments should not only be reported but also made the subject of commentaries. The life and deeds, promises and lies of Communist leaders should be publicized. By the same token, rank and file CP members should be warned, but it should be pointed out that they will be judged by their deeds and not just by Party membership. Such a program would cause chaos and disorganization in Czechoslovakia, and increase passive resistance on the part of the Czechs.
 - It is my opinion that all important news published in newspapers in the CSR, particularly items concerning achievements of the regime, cooperation with the USSR, etc, should be explained in detail and the true picture given by VOA. This should be done regularly.
16. In conclusion, I think I speak for the average person in the CSR when I say that the Voice of America is a part of the daily life of the millions in Czechoslovakia; indeed the whole nation tries to tune in VOA every day. The greater the number of people listening to VOA, the greater the responsibility of those making these broadcasts. A great deal of harm can be done by irresponsible broadcasting. In this connection I would like to emphasize the following points:
- A greater sense of responsibility should be adopted and more care should be devoted to factual reporting.
 - More emphasis should be placed on the survival of people behind the Iron Curtain and less to the American way of life; i.e., more attention should be devoted to events and problems in Czechoslovakia.
 - More of the human touch and more optimism should be included in programs.
 - The Communist Party should be more severely attacked; government leaders should be assailed, but not to such an extent that the plain people would be forced to stick with the CP out of desperation.
 - The people of the CSR should be convinced of the growing strength of the West; VOA should keep harping on the backwardness of the Soviet orbit in all fields of science.
 - All programs should be prepared with the thought that the Voice of America is playing a major role in shaping the future course of history during this crucial struggle.

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